

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE
May 5, 2015
Senior Center, 300 Adams Street
4:00 PM

Members Present: Paul Hartman, Bob Mongin, Marian Ripp, Lynn Austin, Mike Spencer, Jim O'Rourke, Alderman David Nennig, Muriel Austin

Chairman Paul Hartman called the meeting to order at 4:20 PM.

The meeting began with a review of recent events. On April 18, Friends of the Fox River conducted a trash pick-up at St. Francis Park on the Fox River.

Alderman Dave Nennig said that the City is granting variances to the ordinance regarding trash-cart storage: the carts are sometimes being allowed in side-yards or, in the case of elderly citizens, front yards. Dave mentioned that if a request for a variance is denied by the Public Works Department, an appeal may be made to the Improvement & Services Committee.

There was mention of a substantial grass fire at Ken Euers Park last month. How the fire started is not known. Possible causes were discussed, including discarded cigarettes or illegal fires. The wetland areas surrounding the Bay contain pockets of combustible methane; there are historic 17th-century references by the Jesuits of mysterious "thunders" coming out of the Bay, which were believed to be caused by frozen methane rising to the water's surface and exploding. Apparently phragmites cannot be destroyed by fire; it will come back from the roots.

Lynn was in contact with the chairperson for the League of Women Voters. Their organization was not aware that their previous members had founded the Mayor's Beautification Committee, intending it to be a liaison between government and business organizations and the public, for the purpose of education. Lynn sent the chairperson information on the history of the Beautification Committee and their ties with the League of Women Voters; a summary of the Committee's origin was going included in the League's annual report.

Paul Hartman informed the Committee of plans to publish a book on the history of the Green Bay Botanical Garden. The idea to create a local botanical garden came about through the efforts of Paul Hartman and Bob Mongin, who worked on plans for six or seven years before others joined in. The land originally was purchased by NWTC, and leftover land was leased by the Garden at no cost for 100 years. It was noted that NWTC students can view the Botanical Garden for free. Mike Spencer suggested conducting a bird survey within the Botanical Garden, which could be included in the book or published separately, tracking the increase and decline of bird populations.

Jim O'Rourke suggested an East-West contest between the Botanical Garden and the East River and/or the Wildlife Sanctuary; the challenge would involve photographing the greatest number/variety of birds, and posting the pictures online. There was discussion of recruiting people

involved in bird-related professions or associations. Jim also mentioned the annual bird walk for International Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, May 9. The bird walk would take place at 6:00 AM on Baird Creek, starting at Christa McAuliffe Park, with a flower walk at 1:00 PM on the same day.

There was discussion and agreement that Green Bay needs more "green" businesses, and that small businesses could promote the environment through the Internet. It was pointed out that UWGB is an environmental college. Years ago, National Public Radio described Green Bay as "gritty mill town." Lynn brought up the destruction of Admiral Flatley Park, a park with a fountain and mature trees, as an example of our city's insensitivity to the public desire for parks and greenery. She said that Whitney Park would have been destroyed as well—except that Daniel Whitney included a clause in the Navarino plat map which stipulated that if a building was ever erected on the property, it would immediately revert back to his heirs. Cabella's was brought up as another example, since their Green Bay store was built over a wetlands; it was noted that environmental naturalists had started a boycott of Cabella's as a consequence.

Paul Hartman brought up some ideas of things people can do to improve their community—for example, picking up litter—which can be started on an individual basis and expanded into a community project. Committee members observed that many communities are cleaner than Green Bay, and there was discussion on how to improve this. The Beautification Committee was given a silver bowl as a beautification award by Ladybird Johnson, and it was suggested that the Committee could give the award to the "cleanest" Green Bay school—with Ladybird Johnson award certificates given to individual students, signed by the Beautification Committee on behalf of the City.

Regarding the LaBaye Project's letter to the City of Green Bay, Tom Sladek made a motion at the Finance Committee to refer the matter to the Historic Preservation Commission for review. However, Dave Nennig requested that the matter instead be sent to the Beautification Committee for review, and the City Council passed that motion.

Lynn Austin gave an update on the progress of the LaBaye Project. A discussion ensued regarding the government's responsibility for land and vital records and to provide public education. The LaBaye Project was originally started with "seed money" from Wisconsin Coastal Management, with the understanding that the local community would need to provide the rest of the support to complete the project. Lynn said that there has been popular support from educators both within and outside of our own community. She expressed the hope that the project would be funded for its final year (2015) to work on the site's Timeline of History. Brown County's 200th anniversary is coming up in 2018, and the Timeline of History is a much-needed addition to the LaBaye site.

A motion was made: "The Mayor's Beautification Committee moves that the City support the LaBaye.org Project with a one-time donation of \$10,000." The motion was made by Paul Hartman and seconded by Mike Spencer, and passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM. Next month's meeting will take place on June 2.

Respectfully submitted,
Muriel Austin